

BUXTON HALL

By R. THORNES
(R.C.H.M.E., Shelley House, Acombe Road, York)
and J.T. LEACH

INTRODUCTION

Situated at just over 300 metres altitude, Buxton's fame has rested upon its thermal waters which issue constantly at 27.5° centigrade. Its history is almost totally social in nature and indeed the town's first historian, Arthur Jewitt, wrote in 1811 that, '... it has never been the scene of any great public act, or the theatre of any striking event'.¹ Remote and geographically isolated until the coming of the railways it was only once at the centre of national events, in the late sixteenth century, when for a dozen years it became a regular venue for the highest nobility in the land and a centre for court intrigues and traitorous plotting. The centre for this activity was the Hall at Buxton which, until recently, was believed to have been demolished in 1670.

In 1990 the Threatened Buildings Section of the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England surveyed the present Old Hall at Buxton and discovered the substantial remains of the earlier Hall built in 1572-73 by the sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. A report and description of this remarkable discovery was included in the *Archaeological Journal* for 1991.² This article proposes to expand that earlier work by offering a full historical appraisal of the building, a survey of the architectural evidence and a discussion on the influence of Buxton Hall on other tower houses in the region.

HISTORICAL APPRAISAL

Following the death of the second Earl of Shrewsbury, in 1460, the Inquisition Post Mortem revealed he held one rood of land at Buxton juxta Holywell.³ Following the dissolution of the monasteries the Shrewsburys received great estates in North Derbyshire and in 1567 this large holding was augmented through the marriage of George Talbot, the sixth Earl, to Elizabeth (Bess) Hardwick. In 1571 he purchased from the Cotterell family of Marple (Cheshire),

'The Chapel in Buxton County Derby and the Chapel Yard and also one Croft called the Bath Croft also Bath Flatt as it was then inclosed one piece of land or pasture called the Piece beyond the water adjoining to the West and one Dwellinghouse... and all and singular Baths, Springs, Waters and Watercourses...'⁴

In 1572 he commenced to build a new house adjacent to the baths and springs. It is important however to remember that Shrewsbury's Hall was not the first Hall. People had been taking the waters for many years previous to this date and would have needed accommodation. Of earlier date than Shrewsbury Hall was the Auld Hall⁵ owned by Henry de Sacheverell of Ratcliffe upon Soar (Notts) which ran contemporaneously with Shrewsbury's 'New Hall' until he purchased much of the Sacheverell estate in 1578.⁶ Thereafter the Auld Hall seems to have become a service unit to the 'New Hall' being known as the 'Auld Hall Farm' or 'Garlandes Farm' (after the tenant Nicholas Garlande) well into the seventeenth century. An undated rental (circa 1578-90) describes it as, 'The old hall called Garlandes fearme: a dwelling house 3 bayes, a stable 3 bayes:

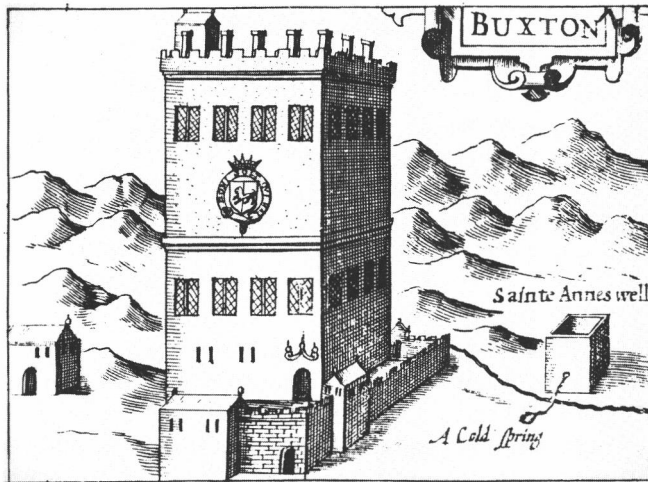


Plate 1 The New Hall as depicted on John Speed's map of Derbyshire (1610).

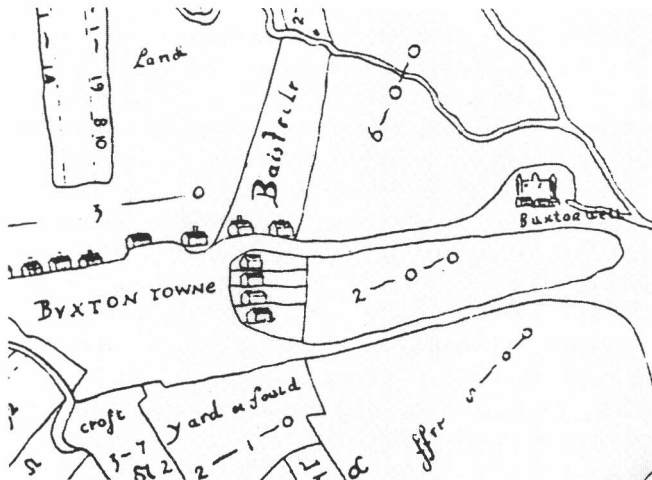


Plate 2 Buxton Hall. Detail of William Senior's Map of 'Buckston', 1631. The New Hall (on the right of the picture) is shown surrounded by a number of smaller buildings. The outline of the Hall as represented here has led to speculation that the building may have had turrets.

a little house on the back syde 1 baye: 6 closes 33 acres: lands not inclosed 18 acres.'⁷

Why Talbot built his house at Buxton is unknown although two reasons are possible. First, the fame of Buxton's waters had spread far by this time (John Heywood, playwright, had associated St. Annes Well with Armenia, Jerusalem, Rhodes and Rome in 1569)⁸ and no doubt Shrewsbury was hoping to capitalise upon his recent acquisition by investing in good accommodation. Alternatively his investment can be seen as providing secure accommodation for Mary, Queen of Scots. Both reasons are probably correct.

The defeat of the Scottish Queen and her subsequent flight south into England caused Queen Elizabeth great anxiety over her mode of custody. A comfortable form of house arrest was decided upon and so she was entrusted into the care of that most worthy nobleman, the sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. After a brief spell at Tutbury she was kept at Sheffield Castle for fourteen years with occasional visits to Chatsworth, Wingfield, Worksop and to Buxton to take the waters for her rheumatism. There has been a lack of consistency over the dates that she attended the baths

at Buxton but recent research has yielded five certain dates — 1573, 1576, 1580, 1582 and 1584.⁹ Considerable concern was expressed over these visits as North Derbyshire was a Catholic heartland and plotters had been discovered in Buxton in 1574.¹⁰ Derbyshire also provided the man who brought about the Scottish Queen's downfall — one Anthony Babington of Dethick. Whether because of the fame of the waters or because of the presence of Mary in the region, the Earl of Leicester took the waters several times. Other visitors during this period were the Earls of Essex, Pembroke and Sussex as well as Doctor Bayley (Queen Elizabeth's physician) and Richard Topcliffe, the Catholic persecutor. Uniquely they recorded their presence through the fashionable pursuit of scratching signatures and motifs on the glass windows of Buxton Hall, a contemporary copy of which (for intelligence purposes) has survived in the Portland Papers at Longleat.¹¹

Fortunately there is also a contemporary description and an early illustration of Shrewsbury's 'New Hall' at Buxton. Dr. John Jones, writing about the benefits of the waters in 1572, describes it as:

'Joyning to the chief springe, betweene the river, and the Bathe is a very goodly house, four square, four stories high, so well compact, with houses of office beneath and above, round about, with a great chambre, and other goodly lodgings, to the number of thirty.'¹²

This description matches an illustration depicted on the bottom right hand corner of John Speed's County Map of Derbyshire dated 1610 where it is shown as a four storey building with crenellations. Previously, these images have been treated with circumspection, particularly in regard to the number of storeys. A later small illustration of 1631 depicts it with a symmetrical front and three towers (the differences are discussed below). Jones also makes reference to the internal arrangement of the building when he states that, '... the ladies, gentlement, wyves and maydes, maye in one of the galleries walke' and there 'if the weather bee not agreeable' play the game of 'Troule in Madame' ('Lady in the Hole' — a version of which is still played in some Sussex pubs). He goes on to note: 'Lykewise men feable, the same may also practize in another gallery of the newe buyldinges.'¹³ The implications of these passages is that there were galleries in a number of buildings, some of which had been built only recently. Jones's account gives the impression that the Hall was already complete by 1572, whereas a letter written by the Earl of Shrewsbury in that year indicates that work was not yet completed. In this letter (dated 16 August 1572) Shrewsbury informed Lord Burghley:

'... Thought good to open and peruse the letters he [Fabian] brought her from the Ambassador, having no warrant to the contrary; and because they contained the Queens answers to her [Mary's] late petitions..., viz, as to going to Buxton, that her Majesty deferred it till next year, as the house is not finished,...'¹⁴

The Hall appears to have been purpose built to provide lodgings for visitors of rank, Jones observing that it would be 'very notable for the honourable and worshipful that shall neede to repair thither.'¹⁵ In the first decade after its completion the guest list was to include some of the highest in the land, and it has already been suggested that the Hall may have been built specifically to provide lodgings which were secure as well as appropriate to a person of Queen Mary's rank. What is certain is that Shrewsbury must have had her proposed visit very much in mind when building the Hall, and that the above considerations may have influenced its final form.

The status of the Hall as lodgings rather than a private house, is confirmed by a charter of 1576

which describes it as ‘... all that capital messuage or tenement called the New Hall alias called the Inne of the Signe of the Talbot.’¹⁶ (The Talbot was the motif of the Shrewsbury family). In addition to the Hall itself there must have been lodging ranges for the retainers of important guests and for the accommodation of poorer visitors, stabling for horses and other service buildings. It would appear then that the Hall was built as the centre piece of an inn complex which owed its existence to the healing waters of the thermal bath and mineral springs. John Speed’s map of Derbyshire (1610) includes a drawing of the Hall which shows a number of associated ranges, two of which are shown incorporated into a crenellated boundary wall enclosing the property. Outside the wall is a building with a cross upon its gable which may be the Well Chapel which was in the vicinity.¹⁷ It is possible that the building of this wall may have been prompted by the need to provide additional security for Mary’s visit. North Derbyshire being a known centre of recusancy was one of the factors which led Queen Elizabeth to have misgivings about granting her consent for Shrewsbury to take his royal prisoner to Buxton. These concerns, along with advice on ways of minimising the risks involved, were conveyed to Shrewsbury by her chief secretary of state, Lord Burghley. Burghley pointed out that ‘her Maty. was very unwylyng yt she shouldgo thither, imagening yt hir desyre was ether to be the more sene of strangers resortyng thither, or for ye acheving of some furder enterprise to escape.’¹⁸ In order to reduce the risk Shrewsbury was advised that ‘it were good yt as little forknolledg abrode as may conveniently be given’ and that ‘others, being strangers from your I..’s company, be forbydden to come thither during ye tyme of ye sayd Quene’s abode their.’¹⁹ Shrewsbury, mindful of the heavy responsibility he bore, wrote to Secretary of State, Sir Francis Walsingham, to assure him that he would ‘carry her [Mary] and kepe hur safely here and there alyke.’²⁰

The 1576 deed is curious because it purports to record the sale of the Hall from Robert and Thomas Newton to Anthony Heathcote, his wife and his son. Whether it passed from the hands of the Shrewsbury within four years of its erection and whilst Mary Queen of Scots was still captive is doubtful. Until further evidence comes to light the significance of this document must be left open to question. The situation is made more difficult by the silence which pervades the next forty years. It does not appear on any known rental, but the Auld Hall Farm (owned by Shrewsbury) does. At a date unknown, but possibly 1615, the Auld Hall Farm was granted by Gilbert, seventh Earl of Shrewsbury to his step-brother Sir Charles Cavendish and thereafter references to it appear in the Portland Papers. The settlements of Bess of Hardwick and the sixth Earl are not sufficiently detailed to say to whom the Hall descended, assuming they had retained the title, and the matter is further complicated by its later administration within the manor of Hartington. Under the Duchy of Lancaster the Shrewsburies were lessees of the manor of Hartington until 1603 when it was granted, to their disgust, to Sir George Hume. He died without heir in 1611 and the manor reverted to the Crown who in turn granted it to Sir George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, in 1616. By this date the (Chatsworth) Cavendishes were the lessees of the manor who, upon acquiring the Hall sometime between 1618-22,²¹ administered it with the manor properties. Although not within the manor it was managed in this way because the family had no other land in Buxton²². They purchased the manor from Villiers in 1663 for £20,000.

The rent for ‘Buxton bath house’ payable in 1622 by Anthony Slacke was some £27 p.a. but that was reduced to £20 in the following and successive years.²³ By 1626 the tenant was Arthur Slacke who, interestingly, in 1631 was also the lessee of the Earl of Newcastle for the Auld Hall Farm and some 53 acres.²⁴ Over and above the normal rent there was an additional three pounds ground rent arising out of the land where the springs issued. This was established by Cotterell in 1571 and was payable until the 3rd Duke of Devonshire purchased it in 1746.²⁵ The principal

rent, payable in moieties at Michaelmas and Lady Day, was raised to £30 p.a. in 1639. This was again increased in 1655 when Anthony Heathcote became the tenant for 21 years upon an entry fine of £20 and a rent of £40 p.a.

Relatively little is known about Buxton Hall in the first half of the seventeenth century. John Pilkington writes that an addition was made to the building in the reign of Charles I, but does not give details.²⁶ The next significant reference to the Hall appears in Charles Cotton's *The Wonders of the Peake*, written in c1670. In this Cotton recounts how:

'... either through the Fault of th' Architect,
The Workman's ignorance, knavery, or neglect;
or through the searching nature of the Air,
which almost always breaths there;
This structure, which in expectation shou'd
Ages as many, as't has years have stood;
chink, and decay'd so dangerously fast,
And near a Ruin; till it came as last,
to be thought worth the Noble Owners care,
New to rebuild, what Art could not repair,
As he has done, and like himself, of late
Much more commodious, and of greater state.'²⁷

This has in the past been taken by a number of antiquarian writers to mean that the 3rd Earl of Devonshire completely rebuilt the Hall, whereas the indications are that he may only have carried out repairs and some remodelling following a fire in 1670.²⁸ It is significant that the accounts for the Hartington estate, of which Buxton Hall was by then a part, do not show any entries for major building works. Indeed, the only mention of building work in the late seventeenth century appears in a letter written between 1685 and 1690 by the tenant, then Anthony Heathcote, to the estate manager, Mr Twigg, in which he mentions the removal of a lantern from the roof of the Hall.²⁹ The fact that a lantern is being removed from a building which, if rebuilt in the 1670s, would have been only a decade old is itself telling. That the building was far from derelict in 1670 is evident from the Hearth Tax return of that year in which the tenant was assessed for twelve hearths³⁰ and a subsequent return for 1676 with an identical assessment.³¹ Further, an inventory of goods seized for rent at the Hall in 1676 mentions goods in the 'Scotch chamber',³² a name which is probably the result of a tradition linking that room with Mary Queen of Scots — a link which was unlikely to have been made if the original hall had been completely demolished.

Concerning the fare provided at Buxton, Michael Drayton enjoyed '... strong ale and good cheer' in 1605 but Lady Arbella Stuart distrusted the local brew in 1609 — she had her ale brought from Tideswell.³³ Oft quoted but not directly attributable to the Hall is Edward Browne's comment in 1652 that:

'... our entertainment was oatcakes and mutton which wee fancied to tast like dog, our lodging in a low rafty room...'³⁴

Little improvement had been made by 1697 when the acerbic Celia Fiennes stayed at the Hall:

'The house thats call'd Buxton Hall which belongs to the Duke of Devonshire its where the warme Bath is and Well, its the largest house in the place tho' not very good, they are all Entertaining houses and its by way of an Ordinary, so much a piece for your dinners

and suppers and so much for the servants besides; all your ale and wine is to be paid besides, the beer they allow at meales is so bad that very little can be dranke, you pay not for your bed room and truely the other is so unreasonable a price and the Lodgings so bad, 2 beds in a room some 3 beds and some 4 in one roome, so that if you have not Company enough of your own to fill a room they will be ready to put others into the same chamber, and sometymes they are so crowded that three must lye in a bed; few people stay above two or three nights it so inconvenient³⁵

Improvement had been made by 1712 when Daniel Defoe recorded that:

‘... his grace has built a large handsome house at the bath, where there is convenient lodging, and very good provisions...’³⁶

This dramatic improvement was brought about by the first of a line of improving landlords at the Hall who was undertaking work around the time of Celia Fiennes visit. Floyer records this work in 1697:

‘New improvements at Buxton Baths AD 1695-96 by Cornelius White, an attorney... of Clements Inn, present tenant to the premises, under his grace William, Duke of Devonshire.

By taking some of the cold springs from the hot, the antient Bath repaired and paved, and a new one made, for the better conveniency of the poor and impotent; And a sough about 200 yards in length, to drain the bath, for the cleansing thereof every Day; with more private apartments for lodgings, new stables, new gardens, new Bowling Green and several Green Walks.’³⁷

Despite these improvements matters deteriorated again because in 1705 the 1st Duke of Devonshire sent, ‘... down from London a fitting and obliging person sufficiently qualified’, and promised that visitors should henceforth, ‘... meet with civic usage and have the best of everything for man and beast at reasonable rates’.³⁸ From this point forward the fortunes of the Hall are inextricably linked to improvements made to the baths complex. The next such work occurred in 1711-12 when John Barker of Rowsley was appointed to rebuild the Bath house (on a site then adjoining the Hall and now within same) and a parallel new stable block to the rear.³⁹

Cornelius White paid a rent of £60 in 1698 and this was unchanged in 1710; by 1726 however it had increased to £80 p. a. In the November of the same year an indenture⁴⁰ of the lease records the tenancy of Mr. Alexander Taylor for a term of 21 years at an enormous rent of £120 pa.. Curiously it records the tenure as being ‘... late in the possession of [Mr] Norton and now in the tenure or occupation of the said Alexander Taylor’. The lease is not clear whether this is a new lease or a renegotiated one as there is a suggestion that Taylor was already incumbent. Undoubtedly Taylor was a good landlord, well respected and a great innovator. Writing in 1734 Thomas Short records:

‘Mr Taylor of the Hall, upon his own expences, keeps a very good pack of hounds for gentlemens diversion, a pleasant warm bowling green planted about with large sycamore trees; and in the house a fine English and French billiard table... new gardens with planting and several curious walks.’

Of the Hall itself Dr. Short says:

‘... up one pair of stairs in the Hall is a beautiful dining room, 17 yards long and 19 feet



Plate 3 The early-eighteenth century front of the Old Hall Hotel.

wide, seven other entertaining rooms, 11 lodging rooms with single beds and closets, 29 other lodging rooms: this one house affords 60 beds for gentlemen and ladies, besides suitable accommodations for their servants and all other proper and useful offices.⁴¹

In 1744 Lord Egmont, visiting Buxton reported, that 'he lay at the great house kept by Mr. Taylor and his wife, who make up 40 beds for company, and when the season is full, find lodgings in the town for others.'⁴²

This is a smaller number than the 60 beds recorded by Short which would indicate a reduction in dormitory rather than bedroom arrangements. Undoubtedly there was a major expansion of the business and this was permitted by extending the south elevation by two bays to give the present principal facade. Short's 'beautiful dining room' is on the first floor but has since been subdivided. William Stukeley the famous eighteenth-century antiquarian stayed in Buxton in July 1725 and drew a 'Prospect of Buxton', now in the Bodleian Library.⁴³ This view of what was then little more than a village clearly shows the original three-bayed building with Barker's bath and stable adjoining. Interestingly there is a range of three buildings behind the Hall which reflects the description of the Auld Hall referred to above. Stukeley's 'Prospect' accords with the known details of Buxton at this time and thus clearly suggests a date for the new western extension between 1725 and 1734; possibly in 1726 coinciding with the massive increase in rent. James Pilkington in 1789 stated that, '... the largest part was not built till nearly the middle of the present century.'⁴⁴ Possibly due also to Taylors activity was the erection of a Ladies Bath and

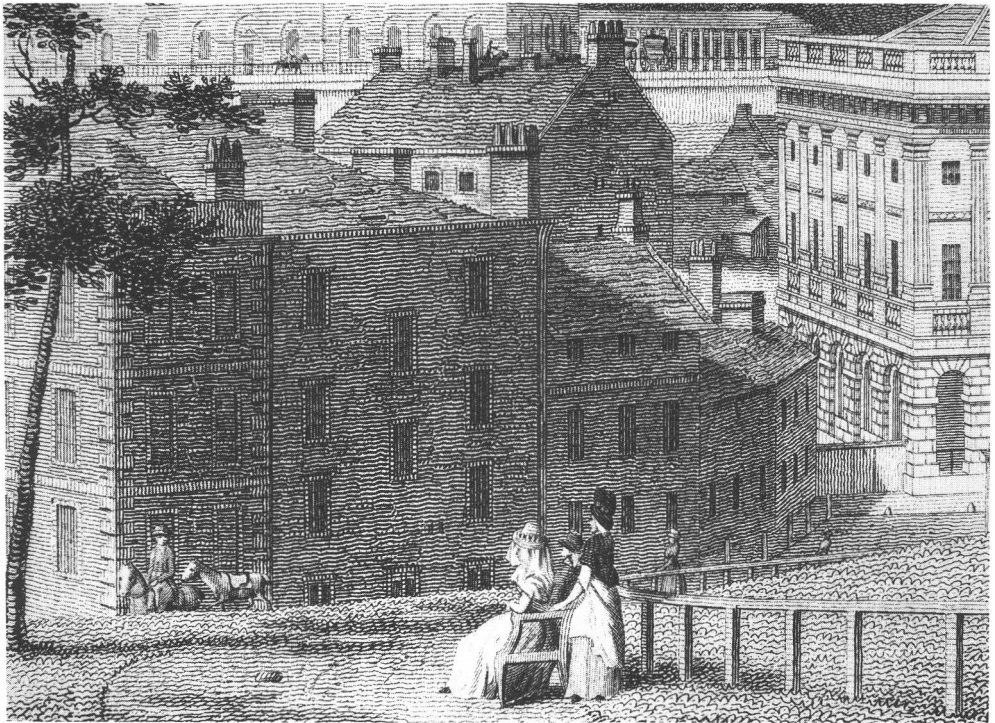


Plate 4 Detail from an engraving of 1804 showing the east front of the Hall prior to the addition of the bay windows and showing the original four storeys.

a new suite of stables at the foot of Hall Bank. Following soon after Alexander Taylor came Brian Hodgson and his son, also Brian. Great entrepreneurs, they were involved in turnpikes and in mining, both locally and in North Wales. Under their custodianship the Hall became a superior establishment.

Its premier role became eclipsed at the end of the century with the erection of the Crescent and associated works by John Carr of York for the fifth Duke of Devonshire between 1780-88.⁴⁵ Following on from Carr came John White who also played a major role in the development of Georgian Buxton. Interestingly the Hall, with direct access to the baths, maintained its superiority over the Crescent hotels until 1795 when both it and the St. Ann's hotel paid a rent of £500 p.a.⁴⁶ In 1790 the Hall had yielded £850 rent whilst the newly opened St. Ann's provided only £500. During this period the second major extension took place with the redevelopment of the bath complex which became necessary due to the increasing demand for better facilities. In Carr's original plan the Crescent would have been built further back, with a new colonnaded bath house where the present St. Ann's hotel now is and overlooking a refurbished Grove Gardens.⁴⁷ Due to the unavailability of land this scheme had to be abandoned and it was decided to develop the bath complex by extending the existing facilities to the rear. Opportunity was taken to build the Hall over part of the complex with a three bay extension on the north side of the former. Although both Carr and White are known to have undertaken works at the baths and Hall it is not known which architect built this extension; it is dateable to sometime between 1797-1805.

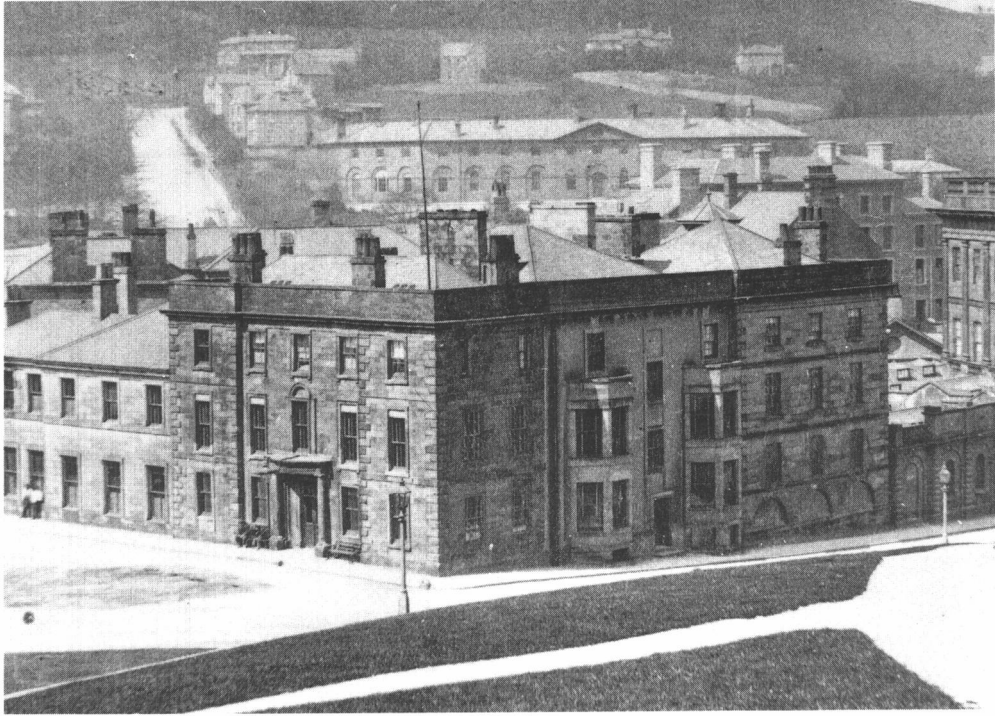


Plate 5 A view of the Hall in 1879 showing the east elevation before the bay windows were raised from two to three storeys. Note also the Devonshire Royal Hospital behind prior to the addition of the dome.

After the Hodgsons came Mrs. Fox, James Cummings, Edward Anthony and Mrs. Mary Bates (nee Hodgson). She ran it very successfully with her son Brian who also acquired the Lee Wood and Royal Hotels and several lodging houses; he retired in 1878.⁴⁸ During the Bates' tenancy a number of structural alterations took place including the last major extension, some six bays, built to the west of the main front between 1855 and 1875. At the end of the period under review the Hall remained one of the premier hotels in the town. Although not as elegant as the Crescent Hotels or as luxurious as perhaps the Palace it retained a quality that the classier and more brash establishments could not espouse. Built in 1572-73 as the New Hall it succeeded the Auld Hall and became plainly known as Buxton Hall for most of its existence. Out of respect for its age it was renamed the Old Hall sometime between 1847 and 1854. Its connection with the Devonshire family was severed in 1954 when it was sold to Mrs. Philp who retained it for many years.⁴⁹

THE ARCHITECTURAL EVIDENCE

Behind the early eighteenth-century south front of the Old Hall Hotel are to be found the substantial remains of the tower house built by George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury and his wife Bess of Hardwick in 1572-73. The building, which was believed to have been demolished in 1670, survives behind eighteenth and nineteenth century alterations and additions. It is a tower



Plate 6 The south-east angle of the Hall, showing the earlier eighteenth century two bay addition to the front with the New Hall (now with canted bay windows) behind. Adjoining the New Hall to the north is a three bay extension built at the end of the eighteenth century over the former hot baths.

house of double pile plan and four storeys in height, a description which matches closely Jones' contemporary account of the building. It has been recognised recently that building work carried-out in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries left intact a significant amount of the fabric of the original structure. The building was recorded in 1990 by the Threatened Buildings Section of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, at the request of Derbyshire County Council.

The similarities between the Shrewsburys' New Hall, as described by contemporary observers, and the present building are striking. Dr. John Jones description of the building as 'a very goodly house, four square, four stories hie, so well compacte'⁵⁰ matches the surviving structure well, as does Speed's reference to it being 'a fair square building of freestone.'⁵¹ Speed also included a somewhat stylized drawing of the Hall in the bottom right hand corner of his map of Derbyshire (1610), this depicting a square tower house with flat roof and crenellated parapet. Speed's drawing is, however, contradicted by a tiny sketch of the Hall on an estate survey, dated 1631,⁵² which shows the building as having a symmetrical front with three towers. It is curious that Speed makes no attempt to show such significant features in his more detailed drawing of the building, and that neither Jones nor Speed refer to them in their descriptions of it. The differences between the Hall as drawn by Speed and the building surviving behind the

Plate 7 Old Hall: east front showing the two nineteenth century canted bays

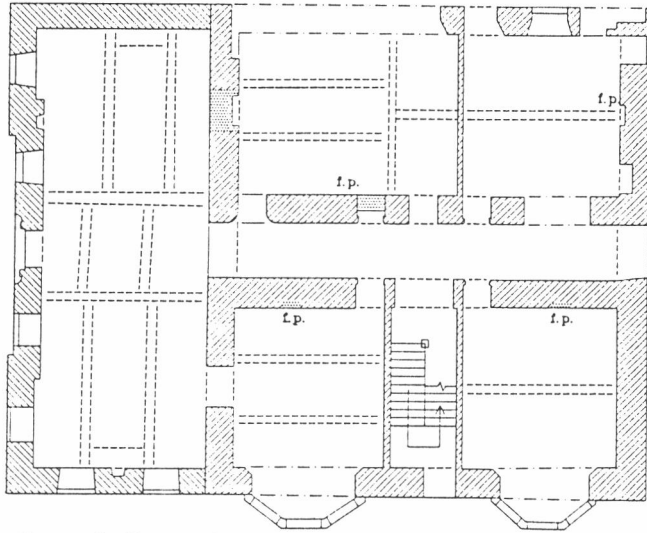


eighteenth-century south front of the present hotel are relatively slight. The only major difference is that Speed shows a building with a four bay south front, fenestrated with two light mullion windows, whereas blocked windows on the second floor of the same elevation of the surviving building indicate a three bay front lit by four light mullion and transom windows. Speed also shows the principal entrance to the building as being on the east side of the front (south) elevation, whereas the evidence of the surviving fabric suggests a centrally positioned entrance (see below).

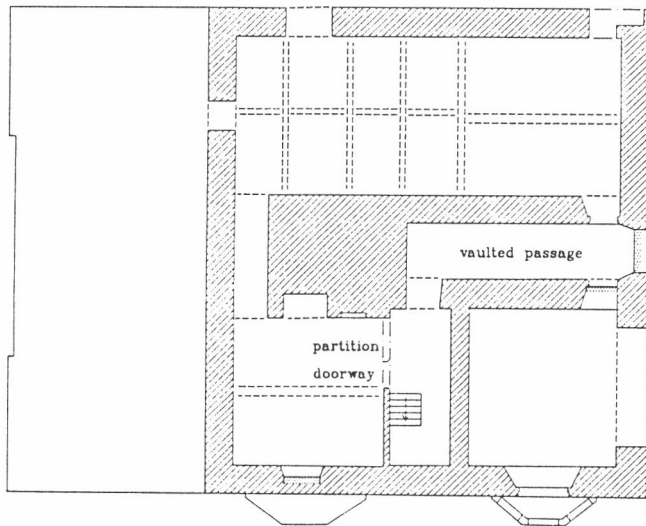
In his major work on Elizabethan country houses Mark Girouard cites a rebuilding in the seventeenth century and regrets the lack of adequate illustrations of the early building. He considers the image depicted upon the Senior map describing it as, ‘... a smaller and more compact Chatsworth.’⁵³ Unfortunately he does not consider the Speed drawing, the accuracy of which could not be ascertained until now.

The Ground Floor (Fig. 1)

The front elevation of the New Hall is concealed behind a later addition. The principal entrance to the Hall, apparently located in the centre of this elevation, opened into a wide corridor running the length of the ground floor. The walls on either side of the corridor are stone built and of the same thickness as the outer walls (approximately 0.9m [3 feet]). The considerable thickness of



Ground floor plan.



Basement plan.

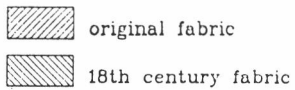


Fig 1 Buxton Old Hall, basement and ground floor plans.



Plate 8 Surviving timber-framed partition adjacent to the staircase on the ground floor

these two internal walls is accounted for by the fact that they each contain the flues of approximately six fireplaces. The internal walls running at right angles to the two principal stone ones are stud partitions — an exposed length of frame of one of which is visible from the basement stairs.

Half way along the corridor, on the east side, is an opening on to the staircase. The present stairs appear to be late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, presumably dating from Devonshire's refurbishment. Across the corridor from the foot of the stairs is an opening into what may have been a second corridor, the former presence of which is indicated by the existence of a ceiling beam on the line of what would have been the south side of the corridor (Fig. 1), and by a blocked doorway that appears to take account of a corridor in the position postulated. If there was indeed a corridor in that position, then the ground floor would have been divided into four rooms of roughly equal size, these being separated by a cruciform circulating space. All four rooms were entered by doorways with depressed arched lintels and chamfered and stopped surrounds. The appearance of these doorways suggests a sixteenth, rather than late seventeenth century date.

Basement (Fig. 1)

At the foot of the stairs down to the basement is the stone jamb of a former doorway, the purpose of which was to give access to a room occupying the south-east quarter of that floor (see Fig. 1). The jamb is chamfered as was the lintel, a fragment of which survives in situ. The other jamb

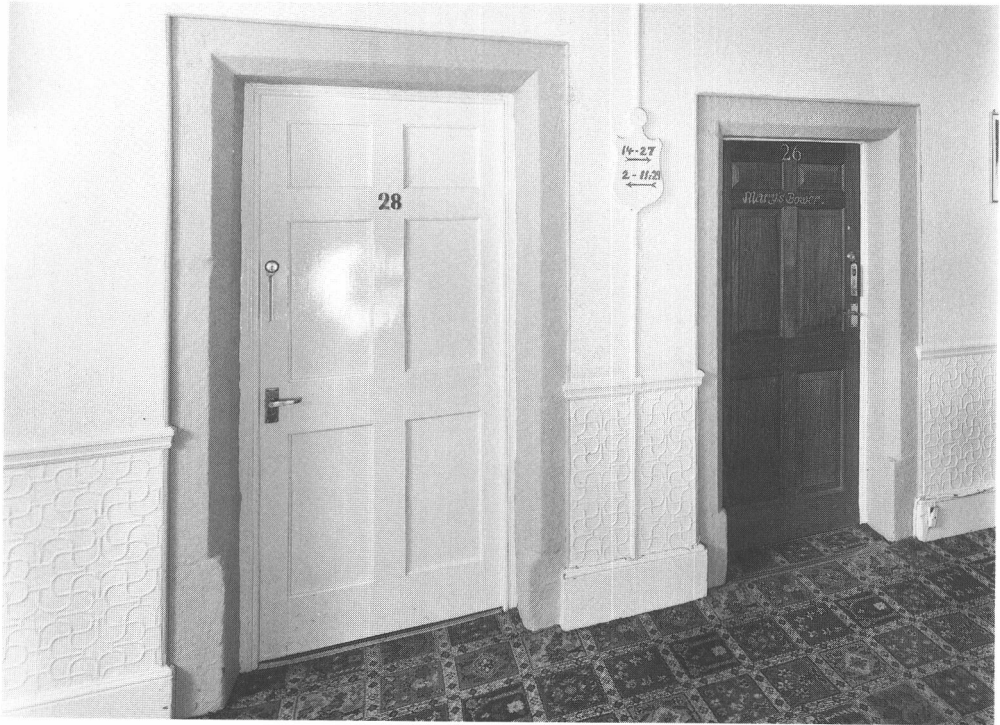
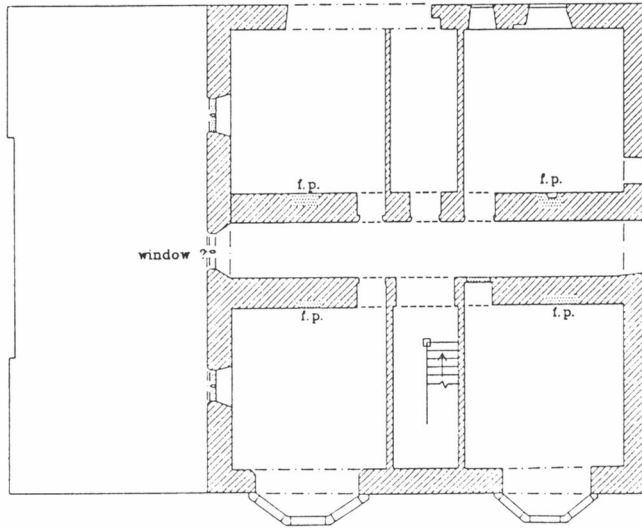


Plate 9 Chamfered and stopped doorways on the first floor

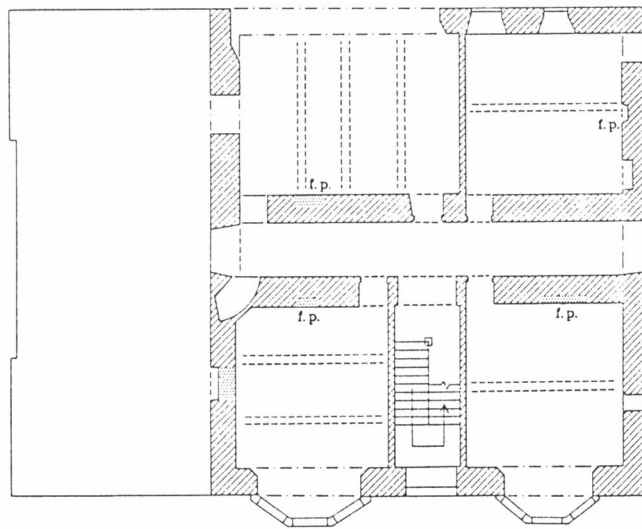
of this former doorway and the partition wall beyond have since been removed. The circulating area in the basement appears to have comprised an L-shaped corridor running from the foot of the stairs to the centre of the rear (north) wall. The length of corridor between the north-west and north-east rooms (beneath the ground floor corridor) has a vaulted ceiling. Access to these rooms was through doorways at the north end of the corridor; both of these doorways, now blocked, had chamfered surrounds. It is possible that some of the basement rooms had functions related to the hot bath. It is also possible that the basement passage was the means by which guests gained access to the bath (the basement floor at the end of the building being at ground level, owing to the slope of the site). The hot spring rises adjacent to the north-east room, raising the possibility that there may even have been a small bath within the building, as well as larger ones adjoining.

The south-east room has a large stone fireplace with plain, unchamfered surround. The general appearance of this suggests that it is a later alteration or insertion. There may have been a basement kitchen originally, although an account of works carried out in 1697 by Cornelius White mentions that an 'outer bath' was made 'where the old kitchen stood.'⁵⁴ This suggests that the Hall was served by a separate kitchen range close by.

The basement was lit by two light mullion windows, two of which survive. An engraving of 1813 shows three two light mullion windows in the east elevation, the southernmost of which is still visible from the south-east room. A second window has been uncovered in the centre of the west elevation, suggesting that this too was of three bays.



Second floor plan.



First floor plan.


 original fabric



Fig 2 Buxton Old Hall, first and second floor plans.

First Floor (Fig. 2)

The first floor was divided into four rooms. The north-west, south-east, and north-east rooms were all of equal size. The south-west room, facing the head of the stairs, was larger than the others, suggesting that it may have been the principal chamber. The doorway to this room, like the others on the first floor, has a flat lintel and chamfered surround, but differs in being noticeably larger. An odd feature of this and the other doorways on the first floor is that the stops on each pair of jambs are at different heights to each other, raising the possibility that the door surrounds have been re-used.

The only fenestration of early date — although not necessarily original — that is visible on this floor is a small splayed window, now blocked, in the north-east room. This appears to have been of only a single light, but may be only a part of a larger window. The presence of this window indicates that any range adjoining this section of wall originally could have been no more than two storeys in height (remembering that basement level at the rear of the building was ground level owing to the slope of the site).

Second Floor (Fig. 2)

The second floor comprised four rooms all of equal size. The doorways to these rooms have the same flat lintels and chamfered surrounds as on the floor below. Two of the doorways — those to the south-east and north-east rooms — were later blocked and new doorways made opening from the stair landing (see Fig. 2). It is on this floor that the best evidence of the building's original fenestration survives. This is to be found in cupboards set into the inner face of the south walls of the south-east and south-west rooms. At the back of these cupboards are blocked four light mullion and transom windows, the mullions and transomes of which are still in situ. In addition, there is evidence for a third window in the centre of that wall, the former presence of which is indicated by the splayed sides of the corridor where it passes through the original wall of the building into the early eighteenth-century addition. This provides confirmation that the front elevation, like the side one, was of three bays.

The main stairs do not continue up to the roof. Access to the roof space now is by a staircase in the corridor. This stair, which blocks the original doorway to the east room, is a later addition. The original stair to the roof appears to have been located between the north-west and south-west rooms — its position being indicated by a doorway with a chamfered surround which opens into a narrow passage beyond. Speed's drawing of the house shows a small stair head turret on the roof of the original house in the position that would have been required for such a stair.

There are vaulted lengths of ceiling at two points along the length of the upper floor corridor, the purpose of which was to support two large stacks into which were gathered the flues from the two masonry internal walls. It is not clear whether these date from the late seventeenth or from the eighteenth century. The upper sections of these flues have since been removed and a flat created in the roof space. The present hipped roof appears to date from the late eighteenth century. It is not clear whether the Hall had a flat roof as Speed's drawing indicates, or shallow pitched roofs of the types found in other Derbyshire tower houses.

Later Alterations

The print in the Bodleian Library dated July 1725⁵⁵ shows the Hall without the present south front. This range appears to have been added between the years 1725 and 1734 during the tenancy of Alexander Taylor, possibly in 1726 when the rent was massively increased. In this instance the evidence of the architecture agrees with a claim made by Pilkington at the end of the century

that ‘the largest part was not built till nearly the middle of the present century’.⁵⁶ The first mention of the range occurs in 1734 in Thomas Short’s book, in which he writes: ‘up one pair of stairs in the Hall is a beautiful dinning Room, seventeen Yards long, and nineteen foot Wide...’⁵⁷ The measurements are approximately the same as those of the first floor room in the eighteenth-century range (now subdivided into bedrooms), showing that that range was built and in use by that date. The new frontage built in yellow sandstone, not the pink gritstone of the earlier building, is of three storeys in height and five bays in length — the outer bays projecting slightly.

There are a large number of nineteenth-century views of the east elevation, largely because of the Hall’s proximity to John Carr’s Crescent. From these it is possible to trace and date changes in this elevation. An engraving of 1813 shows it as being of three bays and depicts the windows as having hood moulds. The canted bays appear to have been added between the mid-1830s and the mid-1850s; an engraving of 1833 shows the building without them whereas a lithograph of the 1850s shows them, but as only two storeys in height. The bays were increased to their present three storeys in height between the years 1878 and 1894 — the bays being of two storeys in a photograph taken in the former year, and of three storeys in another of the latter year.⁵⁸

THE NEW HALL AND THE DERBYSHIRE TOWER HOUSE

Mark Girouard points out that ‘Houses of considerable height and compact plan and turreted outline were no novelty in the Midlands’; adding that it was George Talbot and his wife Bess



Plate 10 Mary’s Tower, Sheffield Manor, South Yorkshire (early 1570s)



Plate 11 The Little Castle, Bolsover, Derbyshire (1612-14)

who had probably introduced them into the area.⁵⁹ He describes Elizabethan Chatsworth, rebuilt by Bess between 1551 and 1576, as comprising tall ranges around a small courtyard, the effect of which would have been to create the impression ‘of a high and compact mass.’⁶⁰ A needlework view of old Chatsworth shows a four storey building with mullion and transom windows and a crenellated parapet.⁶¹ It is likely that Chatsworth was where the ‘Shrewsbury fondness for towers’ began, and that it provided the inspiration for their New Hall at Buxton.

The New Hall was one of two tower houses known to have been built by the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury in the early 1570s; the other being Queen Mary’s Tower at Sheffield Manor (also known as the Turret House). The principal difference between the two is that Queen Mary’s Tower — a smaller structure — does not have a double-pile plan and is of only three storeys in height.

The form of the new hall, as reconstructed by survey work, indicates that it may, in its turn, have been the inspiration for the tower houses that were so fashionable in Derbyshire in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Of these the best known is the Little Castle at Bolsover, built 1612-14 by John Smythson for Sir Charles Cavendish; he inherited his mother Bess’s love of towers. The Little Castle, like the New Hall, is a tower house of double pile-plan and four storeys in height. The plan of the building is similar to the New Hall in that it has a pair of load bearing walls running transversely through the middle of the building, with the principal rooms on either side. The space between the walls is not, however, occupied by a passage, as at Buxton, but by a combination of stairs, passages and closets.

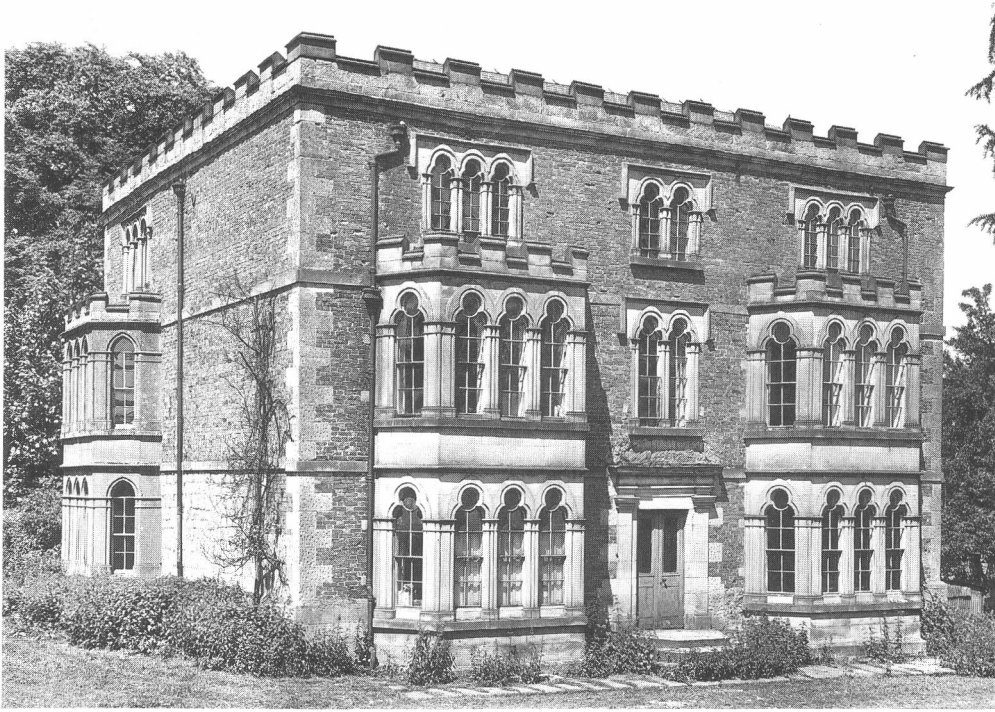


Plate 12 Stydd Hall, Yeaveley, early seventeenth century



Plate 13 Detail of a nineteenth century watercolour showing Stydd Hall prior to remodelling in the 1860s.

The influence of the New Hall on the houses of the Derbyshire gentry is most evident in such double-pile plan tower houses as Stydd Hall, Yeaveley and Holme Hall, Bakewell. Stydd, built in the early seventeenth century, is of four storeys, including basement, and built of brick with stone dressings. The building was much altered in the 1860s, but a watercolour painted at the beginning of the nineteenth century shows that the building did have a crenellated parapet prior to the Victorian remodelling, although the original merlons were semi-circular. The original



Plate 14 Holme Hall, Bakewell (c1626)

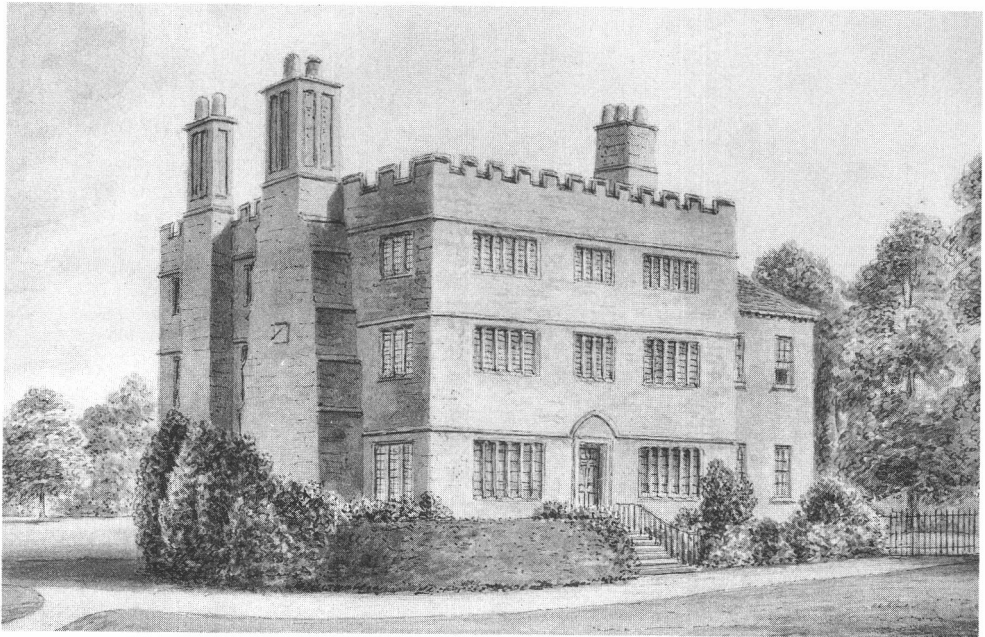


Plate 15 Butterton Hall, Keele, Staffordshire (early seventeenth century)



Plate 16 North Lees, Outseats, Derbyshire (built in the 1590s)

fenestration included both mullion and mullion and transom windows. Unlike the New Hall, the internal load bearing wall runs axially rather than transversely, but as with the New Hall, the flues for the fireplaces are located in this internal wall rather than against the exterior of the building. Holme Hall, built in 1626, is of three storeys and has a projecting porch above the original entrance (now blocked) which rises the full height of the building. A crenellated parapet runs round both the main body of the house and the porch. The building was heated by a centrally positioned stack with six flues.

Another gentry house which may have been influenced by Buxton was Butterton Hall, near Keele in North Staffordshire. The house is now a ruin, having been largely demolished in the second half of the nineteenth century. A late eighteenth-century engraving and a view by Buckler of 1844, show a four storey house with a crenellated parapet. The entrance was in the centre of the building's symmetrical front elevation, and the stair between the two rooms at the rear. The stacks were built against the outer faces of the side walls, a solution which detracted from the buildings otherwise tower-like appearance. The fenestration was three, four, five and six light mullion windows. The only exception is a tall stair window with Y tracery, shown in the late eighteenth-century engraving. This may, however, have been inserted in the second half of the eighteenth century, in the course of a remodelling of the building in gothic style, a choice which may have been inspired by the building's tower like appearance. The form of the building and the disposition of the windows and stacks show that the building had a double-pile plan.

There are a number of important similarities between the New Hall and the Little Castle,

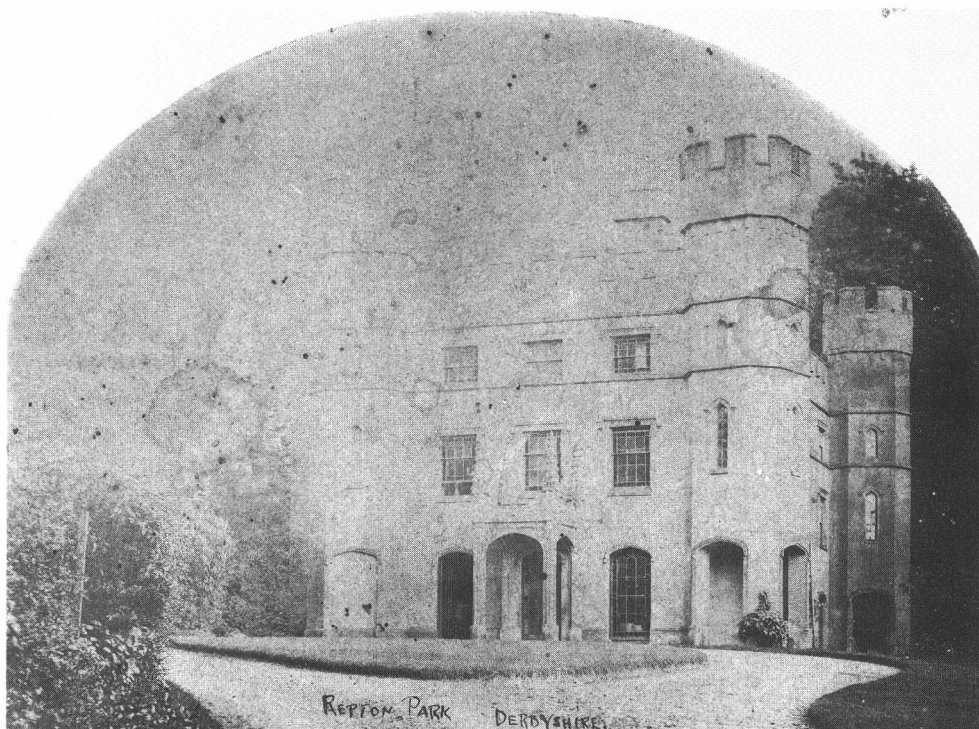


Plate 17 Mid-nineteenth century photograph of Repton Park, Repton, Derbyshire (early seventeenth century)

Stydd Hall, Holme Hall, and Butterton Hall. Firstly, all were built to give the appearance of being towers, the effect being accentuated by crenellated parapets. Secondly, all but Holme Hall were of four storeys in height, the lower storey being a basement. Thirdly, all are early examples of houses with double-pile plans.

Other Derbyshire tower houses which may have been influenced by the New Hall include North Lees, Repton Park, and Tupton Hall. The earliest of the three is North Lees, Outseats, probably built in the 1590s by William Jessop. This relatively slender tower is of four storeys and has a parapet with small semi-circular merlons. The tower — which is two rooms deep — was not self-contained, having been built against a range to the east (this range was later rebuilt). Repton Park in the south of the county was a three storey tower-house — built as a lodge — with turrets at each corner. It was of early seventeenth century date and has been tentatively attributed to John Smythson. The building was remodelled in the gothic style in the late eighteenth century and demolished in 1893. The most unusual and intriguing of the box-like double-pile plan Derbyshire gentry house of the period was, without doubt, Tupton Hall. The house was built by Thomas Gladwyn between 1610 and 1620, and destroyed by fire in the early 1930s. Tupton Hall differs from the above houses in that it had a balustrade instead of crenellation. The plan of the house was odd, in that the central part of the house was of three storeys in height, but the two ends were of five — this arrangement being achieved by having first and second floor mezzanine levels.



SOUTH ELEVATION .

Plate 18 Tupton Hall, Tupton, Derbyshire (1610-1620). This elevation is one of a number of measured drawings made before the building was destroyed by fire in the 1930s.

It is therefore not surprising that the New Hall might have proved influential on the gentry houses of Derbyshire, when one considers that it was built by the most eminent family in the county to an advanced design, yet modest scale, and was, moreover, relatively accessible to the very social class to which it was most likely to appeal. The extent to which houses like Stydd, Holme, and Butterton were influenced directly by the New Hall, or indirectly by way of the Little Castle, is difficult to judge. Whatever the precise influence of these houses on one another, the New Hall clearly played a significant role in the development of this interesting and important group of houses.

CONCLUSION

The high houses of the North Midlands and South Yorkshire are a significant group whose introduction has been attributed to the Shrewsburys.⁶² Chatsworth was an early prototype of the larger, turreted, variety such as Worksop, and Buxton Hall and its near contemporary, Sheffield Manor, are important and influential buildings of the smaller, more compact type. Indeed it may be significant that both these latter towers were probably built to house Mary, Queen of Scots.⁶³ Mark Girouard compares Buxton with Thorpe Salvin (Yorks) and suggests that it may have influenced the latter.⁶⁴ Whilst this comparison may not now be strictly accurate there is now little doubt that Buxton hall was influential in the evolution of this distinctive regional style. In the national context the survival of a building which accommodated both Mary, Queen of Scots, and much of the Elizabethan nobility is of considerable note. Its importance in architectural terms is further enhanced as it is believed to be the earliest known British building of cross-axial plan form.⁶⁵

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